

## take the crown (and keep it) by krelboyne

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**Summary:**

He only came for this. For his - what's the word?

His *resignation*.

To step down from his fake platform, and to hand his crown over.

Had willingly walked into this party, just to be dethroned. Or.

Just because he felt like fighting.

He knew he could count on Billy Hargrove to give him that.

## take the crown (and keep it)

### Author's Note:

Day 6. Stargazing.

'I think the party's over.'

The house is quiet now; dark. It's Tiffany's place, or it might be Jessica's. Steve can't quite remember. It might have something to do with the fist he received to the face or, maybe he just never really cared in the first place.

He's lost his crown.

It's bullshit, anyway. Made of fucking *plastic* this whole goddamn time.

He'd lost it before Hargrove paraded into Hawkins, all fire and sex and rock 'n roll.

King Steve doesn't exist, and never really has existed. It's all small town bullshit.

*Bullshit.*

Nancy's right.

Steve is bullshit through and through, which is why he came to this party in the first place. The first party since his last, when Nancy had pointed it out for him. Put everything into perspective and had helped Steve realise.

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For once, Steve had been right about something.

Now, they're lying on their backs, on Jessica's lawn - or Tiffany's lawn - and the crowd have dispersed. The crowd dispersed a lifetime ago, really. After the first punch: Billy's fist to Steve's jaw. Steve had stumbled, tripped over his own feet and landed, with a thud, in the freshly cut grass. There'd been murmurs from their audience. A couple of *oof's*, that sounded mildly sympathetic, and several more groans, or laughs, that sounded quite like Steve's crown slipping from his head and smashing into pieces.

They'd thought the fight was over, or they just stopped caring, because people had left them to it. Had gone on with their drinking games inside the house; had gone on dancing and making out, and having *normal* fun, while Steve stayed outside, just to get his kicks.

Just to heave himself up from the ground, much to Billy's surprise. To throw himself at Billy, fists swinging. Got him in the stomach, actually, and there was something satisfying in Hargrove's pained grunt. The way he'd stumbled backwards, too. Gratifying, even if, ultimately, Billy had stayed standing.

Billy had shot back, all fists and strength, as though he was trying to win.

Like he didn't know that Steve's already lost everything.

That's how he fought, though; with nothing to lose, and that's probably why, in the end, Steve got an impressive punch in there. One with enough impact, enough force, to land Billy on the floor, after all.

And. Steve had been light-headed, weak-kneed, and had flopped right down with him. Next to him. Had actually spared the dick a once-over, just to make sure he hadn't caused too much damage. He quickly relaxed after noticing the wicked smile on Billy's face, as though he was enjoying it just as much as Steve.

They've caught their breaths now. They've been here, tucked into the grass, shoulder-to-shoulder, for too long.

Long enough for the navy sky to turn *black*. Long enough to hear cars screech away from the house.

To hear silence unfold around them.

Long enough to realise that nobody cares about their disgraced king, or their newly-anointed king.

It's all bullshit.

Steve just hums in response to Billy's comment. Says, 'It was a shit party, anyway.'

Billy laughs, and it sounds hoarse. Sounds like Steve has punched him in the throat, not in the nose. 'Guess that's something we can agree on.'

Steve stays silent. Stares straight up, instead. The sky's clear, not a cloud in sight; a dark blanket, speckled with diamonds.

The sky is usually quite impressive in Hawkins. That's one thing, perhaps the only thing, the town has going for it.

It's just. The last time Steve was on his back like this, watching the stars, Nancy had been with him. Had been talking about *constellations*, and other things that Steve couldn't wrap his head around, but. That hardly mattered. What mattered was *Nancy*, and stars, and *love*.

It's different, here. Looking up at the stars and knowing, now, that everything's bullshit. It doesn't quite take the spark away from the dots in the sky, though. Steve figures that, maybe, they're the only thing that *do* matter. Knows now, what Nancy had meant when she'd told him that looking up at the sky, at the stars, makes her feel small.

The sky is infinite, and everything down here is bullshit.

Steve drags his eyes away from the sky. From the only thing that

matters. Tilts his head so he can look at Billy, instead. 'You know it's all bullshit, right? The whole 'king' thing? Everything about Hawkins?'

Billy shifts so he can look right back. It seems, for a second, that he'd been faraway too. Steve wonders, only fleetingly, what Hargrove thinks about when he looks at the stars. Does he see what Steve sees? Does he see their beauty? Does he feel small? Steve reckons that Billy would try to pick a fight with them if he could.

'Then why'd you come to fight me?'

It's a reasonable enough question. It's just that, Steve's honest answer is far from reasonable.

It doesn't stop him from saying it though.

'Because I felt like it.' He grinds his teeth together. Hears his jaw click and he winces. It's probably swollen. 'Because I wanted to fight and I assumed you'd be here.'

'Ah,' Billy says, like he gets it. Then, 'You wanted to fight *me* specifically?'

'I knew you wouldn't let me down.'

Billy scoffs, but it sounds amused. Sounds like he might be saying, *figures*.

Steve's eyes fix to the spot of red beneath Billy's nostril. Dark and crusted, where Billy had given up trying to suppress the bleeding against his sleeve. Had just let it settle and dry instead. 'Sorry about your nose.'

'Huh.' Billy waves a hand. 'I've had worse.'

'Me too.' Steve shoots back, like it's some sort of competition, but. It's also true. He'd taken one hell of a beating from Jonathan Byers, once upon a time.

After that, silence settles again, and Steve wonders why Billy hasn't already pushed himself up to his feet. Hasn't already left, with the

others. Shouldn't he be driving a date home? Or maybe getting some in the backseat?

He looks away from Hargrove and back to the sky. To the only thing that matters.

The stars have been watching them; have witnessed every punch and stumble, have heard every groan and sigh. They've watched Steve slip the crown from his own head. They've watched him crush it up beneath his fists and his feet, where he's left it, in tiny shards, for Billy Hargrove to collect and put together again. To polish it up. To place on his own head. If he wants it.

He can have it.

He'll wear it better, anyway.

Hawkins' new king is groaning; shifting so he can prop himself up on his elbows. Steve stays on his back.

King Billy says, 'You get what you were looking for?'

Steve says, 'Yep.'

'Good.' Billy's getting to his feet now. Standing up, while Steve's on the ground. Already filling their new roles. Right where they belong, but. Billy says, 'Want a beer?'

And Steve's still on the ground, Billy standing over him. He cocks his head, stares up at Hargrove who's blocking the sky, the stars.

Billy shrugs. 'Got some cans in my car.' He kicks his feet against the grass, as though he's knocking off dirt from the bottom of his boots. 'Up to you.'

Steve has nothing left to lose.

'Sure. Why not?'

Billy sticks a hand out for Steve to grab. Possibly a repeat of his trick back on the basketball court. But. Steve has nothing left to lose, so he reaches out and clutches Billy's palm.

A second later, he's on his feet, face-to-face with Billy Hargrove. King of Hawkins.

But.

It's all bullshit.

Maybe there's no such thing. Maybe Hawkins isn't supposed to have a king.

Maybe they're both bullshit. Losers.

Because there's nobody around. Nobody cares.

Their audience have fled.

Except for the stars.

Steve brushes the dirt off his jacket. Says, 'Let's get out of here.'